

# **Information and Communication Services to Support Clinical Research: Broadening the Library System\***

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## **OBJECTIVES**

The Hahnemann University Library, in cooperation with the Office of Research Administration, is building an integrated resource of information and communication services for researchers. The principal goal of this three-year, multi-faceted project is to increase research and research productivity at Hahnemann. The primary objectives fall into four categories:

### **Communication Services**

- To develop an online conferencing/bulletin board system for investigators with similar research interests and for use by groups such as the Committee for Human Subjects.
- To maintain a calendar of research-related internal meetings, programs and important deadlines.
- To build a database of research equipment in university laboratories which might be shared.
- To build a database of faculty expertise.

### **Information Services**

- To build a database of internal research support services.
- To provide online access to SPIN, a database of funding sources
- To distribute funding information from SPIN via electronic mail as a selective dissemination of information (SDI) service.
- To post notices of other research and contract opportunities on the bulletin board.

### **Sequence Databases and Programs**

- To make available on-site access to, and analysis of, GenBank and other molecular biology databases.

### **Document Delivery**

- To provide online requesting of documents from the library.
- To deliver full text of articles from the library to departments via the institutional LAN.

This suite of services, named RIS for Research Information System, was chosen following a survey of the faculty to assess their needs for information to support their research. However, few systems have a single goal, and RIS will undoubtedly be useful in many ways not originally intended. Some obvious additional advantages of RIS, which could be regarded as ancillary objectives, are:

- To increase the computer literacy of Hahnemann faculty and expand their awareness of the options for obtaining and managing information.
- To increase communication among Hahnemann faculty.

## **DISCUSSION**

Most of the first users of RIS have been the basic science researchers and graduate students. In part, this is because there are more active basic science researchers than clinical researchers at Hahnemann at present. However, all the RIS services are equally useful in clinical research and several could benefit patient care directly.

Given the potential national level shift of funding from basic science to more results-oriented research, basic scientists are expressing increasing interest in collaborating with clinicians. RIS could become an important mechanism for bringing the two groups together at Hahnemann.

RIS contains an extensive evaluation component. The evaluation will measure three factors thought to have a positive impact on research that might be influenced by RIS. These are increased collaboration, success in recruiting funded researchers, and an increase in the rate of awards to competing proposals. The specific RIS services will also be evaluated through extensive use of online questionnaires and by recording actual use.

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